

TOUGH

Former state Sen. Don Frank, author of seat-belt law, dies

By Robert Whereatt
Staff Writer

congenital heart problem, his son said.

The father of Minnesota's seat belt law, former state Sen. Don Frank of Spring Lake Park, died Thursday morning at his workplace in Brooklyn Park.

Frank, a DFLer, served in the Minnesota Senate from 1980 to 1992, when he was defeated in a party primary by Sen. Don Betzold, DFL-Fridley.

Frank, 58, had a heart attack, according to his son Peter, of Cottage Grove. He'd been fitted with a pacemaker earlier this year to correct a

The senator came to the seat-belt issue with some passion. A 1972 auto accident left his wife, Frances Mary, in a coma for seven days and

Obituaries

another son, Andy, with 210 stitches in his face. The two recovered, but Frank was convinced they may have been less seriously injured had they been buckled in.

In 1986, the Legislature passed Frank's bill. In subsequent years he convinced legislators to stiffen the

law, enacting a fine for failing to buckle up. The original law called only for a warning ticket.

Frank was elected to the Spring Lake City Council in 1971. In 1973 he lost a bid for mayor. In 1976, he lost in his initial try for the state Senate.

Four years later he beat Sen. David Schaaf in the DFL primary and won the general election. He was reelect-

ed in 1982, 1986 and 1990.

He lost to Betzold in 1992, largely over the abortion issue, according to friends. Frank opposed abortion, while Betzold was an abortion rights supporter.

Frank is survived by his wife and four sons, Peter; Andy, of Spring Lake Park; Paul, of Denver, and Mark, of Eau Claire, Wis.

Visitation will be from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., Sunday, Miller Funeral Home, 6210 NE Hwy. 65, Fridley. There will be a parish prayer service at 7 p.m. Sunday at the funeral home.

The funeral service is scheduled for Monday at 11 a.m. at St. Timothy's Catholic Church, 707 89th Av. NE, Blaine. There will also be visitation one hour before the service at the church.

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